

## PARTNERSHIP

In 1998, an agreement was signed, forming a unique new partnership dedicated to helping communities throughout the state of Washington to improve their physical and cultural environments. Through this agreement, the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA, or Rivers & Trails) program of the National Park Service joined with the Washington Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (WASLA) to provide no-fee technical assistance to RTCA projects.

The RTCA program provides technical assistance to cooperating communities, at their request, for local projects that develop trails and greenways, preserve open space, conserve rivers, promote health and wellness, and provide watershed planning. WASLA, the organization representing landscape architects and designers in Washington State, is directed by its constitution and bylaws to advance education and skill in the art and science of landscape architecture.

Through the agreement originally signed in 1998 and renewed in 2003, RTCA and WASLA established a partnership through which WASLA provides volunteer services and expertise as part of RTCA's technical assistance to communities. This initial RTCA/WASLA regional agreement served as a model for the national RTCA/ASLA agreement signed in 2000 in St. Louis, Missouri.

To date, the partners have successfully collaborated on four design workshops (also known as “charrettes”) to assist communities in Washington state. Two of these took place on the western side of the state and two on the eastern side. The most recent charrette was conducted in the fall of 2003. RTCA and WASLA, together with the Washington State Department of Health (WSDOH), and the City of Moses Lake, signed a partnership agreement to organize and facilitate a community-based design event to develop a pathways and trail system for the Moses Lake area.

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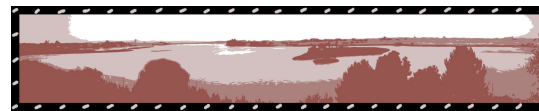
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2003 COMMUNITY  
HEALTHY  
COMMUNITIES—



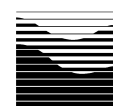
MOSES  
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Washington

ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIP

American Society of  
Landscape Architects  
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Chapter



A S L A

## COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Neighborhoods, small towns, and community and regional groups sometimes face planning or design challenges that they are unable to meet due to a lack of expertise, direction, funding, or other resources. This partnership between the National Park Service's RTCA program and WASLA gives communities the opportunity to benefit from the pairing of RTCA's organizational resources with the technical skills of WASLA's landscape architects. RTCA and WASLA cooperate with local community members to organize events for generating ideas and potential solutions to the community's challenges.



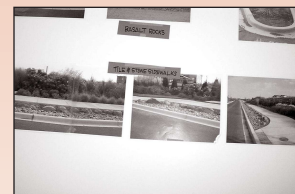
One of the most effective vehicles for producing ideas with limited time and resources is the *design charrette*. A charrette is typically an intensive, illustrated brain-

storming session that involves any number of people and lasts from a few hours to a few days. Traditionally, it dates from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris (in the 19th Century), where professors would send a cart (“charrette”) around to pick up students’ work at the submission deadline. Some students, frantic to complete their drawings, would jump on the cart as it rolled down the street, hence, working “*en charrette*.”

During a charrette, volunteer design professionals work to quickly grasp local problems and devise solutions with drawings. The image of frantic, last minute drawing is characteristic of today's charrettes, sometimes described as “organized chaos.” The objectives are high creativity and productivity. The intensity and confusion of the charrette often yields rich ideas that may not emerge in a slower, more controlled process.

The ideas generated during a charrette are typically presented back to the community in a public forum of some kind. No idea is discarded due to impracticality or questionable details. These decisions are for the community to make later, after the event.

This is the story of how the RTCA/WASLA charrette process helped one Washington community envision its future...



Produced by the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service, the Washington Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Washington State Department of Health. Designed by Gilchrist LanDesign. Written by Christopher Saleeba. Photos courtesy of RTCA. Printed on recycled paper.





In 2001, the Washington State Department of Health (WSDOH) received funding from the national Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to develop a state plan aimed at promoting physical activity and nutrition in an effort to reduce obesity and prevent associated chronic diseases. Moses Lake was identified as the community to pilot, or model, the application of the state's plan because of its diversity, rural setting, economic and educational levels, strong community leadership, and local interest in promoting physical activity. "Healthy Communities – Moses Lake" was conceived and supported through the combined technical and financial assistance of the National Park Service, WSDOH, CDC, and the University of Washington.

One goal of Healthy Communities – Moses Lake is to create a network of linked "activity paths" to be used throughout the town for recreation, non-motorized transportation, and tourism and to promote healthy lifestyles in their community. Moses Lake is a rural community in the Columbia River Basin of eastern Washington with a strong agricultural history and is home to one of the state's largest natural freshwater lakes. With numerous parks and campgrounds, Moses Lake is an outdoor recreational wonderland. However, the current street network in Moses Lake favors the automobile with wide streets, few bike lanes, and incomplete sidewalks and trails.

In the fall of 2003, the City of Moses Lake hosted a 3-day charrette organized, facilitated and sponsored by RTCA, WASLA and WSDOH. Forty-nine charrette participants, including landscape architects, designers, students, RTCA staff, WSDOH and CDC personnel, members of the Moses Lake Trail Planning Team, Moses Lake citizens, and municipal staff gathered to develop a master plan for expanding and enhancing the city's pathways and trail systems to promote walking and biking.

Prior to this charrette, the Trail Planning Team surveyed residents of Moses Lake to gain information about where people live, places that residents wanted to connect to a walk/bike path, design elements that would make walk/bike paths enjoyable and safe, and predicted frequency of use. Through this survey, eighteen sites were identified as potential connections, ranging from the expansive lakeshore, to City Hall and shopping destinations such as Wal-Mart. Several other key issues and obstacles were identified through the survey, providing the charrette with the context necessary to develop creative ideas and solutions for a cohesive trail network. This unique opportunity to encourage walking and bike riding by connecting neighborhoods, downtown, schools, parks and other points of interest was clearly welcomed by the community.

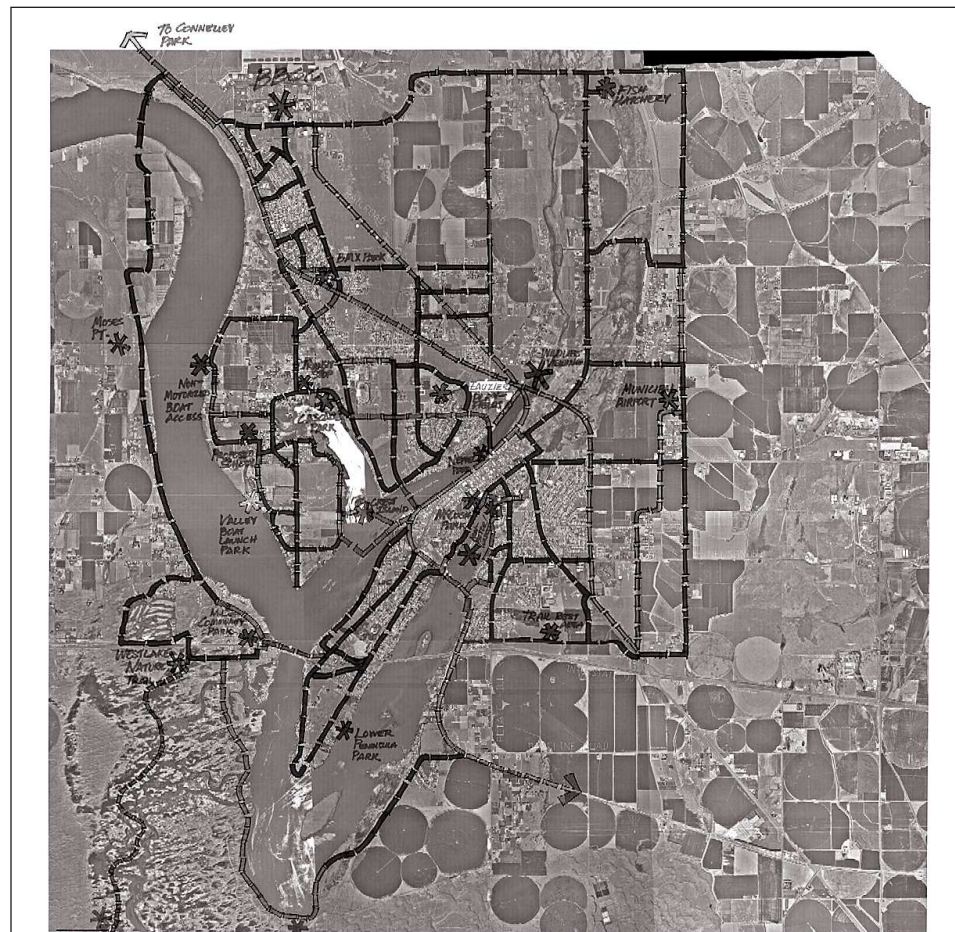
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## RESULTS

Following general approval by the Moses Lake City Council, a report of the 2003 "Healthy Communities – Moses Lake" charrette and the resulting master plan was broadly circulated in a tabloid published by the Columbia Basin Herald, creating a level of excitement locally well beyond what earlier press coverage of the trail planning efforts generated. The tabloid has been widely used by the City and the Trail Planning Team (TPT) to inform others (including potential partner organizations and funding sources) about the proposed pathways and trail system.

Soon after the charrette, the City and TPT began developing the "Heron Trail"—ranked as the top priority at the charrette open house and subsequent surveys—with discussion of acquisition needs, design, permitting, grant writing and ongoing community outreach. A request was submitted to the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation for a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant. To meet the grant requirements, the City Council pledged, in April, 2004, matching funds from its 2005 budget to supplement what TPT and the community could raise from other sources.

The Moses Lake project has earned statewide notoriety, as well. It was recognized as the 2003 Outstanding Bicycle and Pedestrian Project by the Washington State Department of Transportation, and earned the 2004 Community Partnership Award by the Washington Coalition Promoting Physical Activity.



The proposed pathways and trail network produced at the Moses Lake charrette.

On Friday afternoon of the charrette weekend, participants gathered in Moses Lake and were organized into five design teams. Each team was designated a geographical area of the city and was responsible for designing a local pathways and trail network that could be connected to a city-wide system. After initial introductions, team members were given a driving tour of Moses Lake followed by an evening dinner and discussion, keyed by Dr. David Buchner, Chief of CDC's Physical Activity and Health Branch.

Early Saturday morning, participants reconvened to discuss, as a group, overall project goals and the charrette process. Then design teams began intensively studying their designated area and brainstorming "big picture ideas," actively talking and sketching throughout the morning. Each team then presented their conceptual ideas back to the larger group. This allowed everyone to see what each others' teams were thinking thus far, and encouraged teams to work both independently and together. After this initial presentation, teams were instructed to develop, in greater detail, plan, section and perspective drawings, and a narrative describing their trail system concepts.

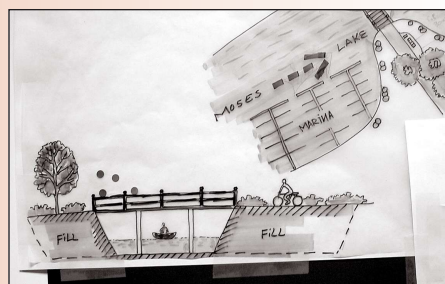
In the afternoon session, some teams revisited their sites to better understand their design area and issues, while others continued to work vigorously on their drawings. Each team explored different alternatives according to site conditions in their area and identified specific design strategies for streetscapes, connections to the waterfront, multi-use paths, and bike lane opportunities. Team members were encouraged to take a break in the evening from their work for a lakeside dinner together.

Charrette participants gathered again early Sunday morning to add the final touches to their designs and prepare presentations for a mid-day open house planned for interested local citizens. The overall master plan, identifying potential routes, major connections, and key walk/bike destinations was outlined for the audience. Then, with the help of team members, each of the five team captains presented an array of illustrative plans, drawings, and lists of ideas for their designated geographical area.

Together the presentations described a proposed network of multi-use paths, bike lanes, signed bike routes and pedestrian trails throughout Moses Lake. Destinations for community events, recreation facilities, interpretive opportunities, and habitat zones were recommended as an integral part of the trail plan. Following questions, and voices of support for the plan, the event culminated with attendees "voting" for the proposals and design elements they felt were high priorities for early development.

"This charrette, considering the complexity of dealing with both urban and rural areas and their connectivity, went as well—or even better in some ways—than any of the others I have helped organize, coordinate and work on."

Don Benson, WASLA



"The charrette was the biggest step that we have taken to continue our goal for creating and improving our activity trails. The charrette provided direction, public input, and a start of a master plan that we could never have completed without it."

Gary Harer, City of Moses Lake